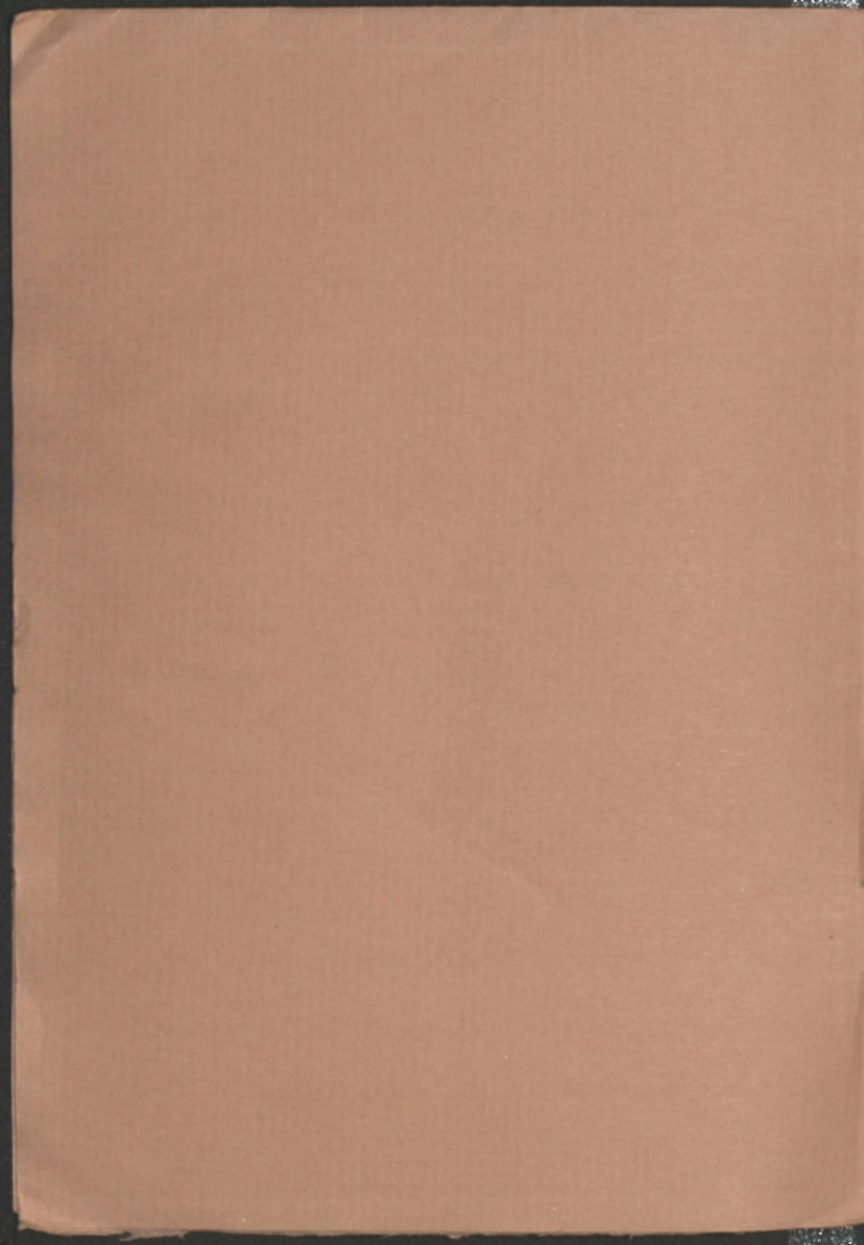


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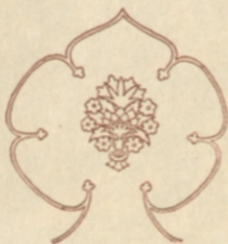
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The Triumph of Naturalism



Decorative Fabrics of Distinction

STROHEIM & ROMANN

730 FIFTH AVENUE at 57th STREET
NEW YORK

CHICAGO
Heyworth Bldg.

BOSTON
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PHILADELPHIA
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LOS ANGELES
Chillis Block

SAN FRANCISCO
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Gothic textile with hunting pattern



AT one time the style known as Gothic was supposed to have originated with the Goths, a warlike Teutonic tribe which overran Europe in the third and fourth centuries. As a matter of fact, it had nothing whatever to do with this barbaric people. The term is used rather to distinguish the art style which prevailed in Europe between the Romanesque era and the Renaissance.

IT has been said that Gothic was to a large extent the "crown of Romanesque." The first real divergence between the two styles dates from about the middle of the twelfth century, when pointed arches

in association with ogival vaults first began to be systematically used in architecture. These, together with high-pitched roofs and towering spires, pinnacles and flying buttresses served to accentuate the feeling of verticality and the aspiring tendency of the age.

GOTHIC art was indeed a fitting expression of the intense emotionalism, the fervid mysticism, and the desire for a freer and more intellectual development, which inspired the peoples of Europe during the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

NORTHERN FRANCE, whose artistic traditions contributed largely to the formation of the new style, was responsible for some of the most beautiful examples of Gothic architecture. There, too, the native artificers wrought their realistic sculptured ornament with superb delicacy and consummate skill and beauty.



*14th century Gothic textile pattern showing huntresses
at a fountain.*

NATURALISM was the underlying principle upon which these designs were based. Native plants, growing perhaps in his own garden, furnished the artist with his models. Long familiarity enabled him to render these flower and foliage forms with loving fidelity and patient accuracy.

THE simple, direct realism of the thirteenth century, or early Gothic period, gradually was transformed into the more

forceful, energetic and efflorescent style of the fourteenth, and later into the clever, exaggerated, flamboyant style of the fifteenth century.

IT was during the Gothic period that the silk weaving industry was introduced into France. Certain old poetic romances would lead us to suppose that the weaving of silk was practiced there from the twelfth century, while more exact records contain undisputed evidence that a limited number of gold and silken tissues were manufactured at Paris towards the end of the thirteenth or at any rate the beginning of the fourteenth century. It is also claimed that silk weavers and their looms were installed at Avignon by the popes during the years of their residence there from 1309 to 1377.

THESE early ventures into the realm of silk weaving were no doubt prompted by the growing desire for more cheerful and luxurious surroundings. Up to the time of



Moated castles from the principal motif of this 14th century Gothic textile.

Louis IX, or "Saint Louis," the palaces of the French lords and sovereigns were characterized by extreme simplicity. Although the Crusading King himself wore only grey woolens in winter and dark silks in summer, and presented his friends with shirts made

of haircloth, courtly display was during his reign more in evidence than ever before in France. And it is interesting to note that the hundred or more beggars to whom the king daily dispersed charity were admitted to the palace by way of the back door, in order that the royal dignity might be preserved.

SILKS of French manufacture may possibly have helped to ornament the grey and forbidding palaces of this time, but certainly most of the luxurious fabrics which found their way into the hands of European princes came either from the Orient, from Sicily or from Italy.

AT the turn of the thirteenth century, the Italian silk weaving industry first began, along with the other crafts, to reflect Gothic influence. The appearance of the new style was coincident with the arrival (in 1265), and the subsequent advance to power of Charles, Count of Anjou, a broth-

er of Saint Louis. The crowns of Sicily and Naples, known as the two Sicilies, which had first been held by the descendants of Robert Guiscard, the Norman, were offered to Charles by Urban IV, in consideration of a yearly tribute, it being his intention to crush the rule of the Hohenstaufens. Once established in his new domain, the Count of Anjou became one of the most powerful of European sovereigns. His rule extended not only over the French provinces, Anjou and Provence, and over Naples and Sicily, but he was imperial vicar of Tuscany, and lord of many cities in Piedmont and Lombardy.

WITHOUT doubt, the retinue of Charles included many skilful artificers who were prepared to exercise their authority over the crafts of the native workmen, much as their master with his inordinate ambition imposed his will upon the laws and customs of the country.

THE transition from the high mediæval silk style to the Gothic was accomplished suddenly and with decision. We might expect to find, in the new patterns, motifs repeating the plant ornaments which so beautifully enriched the architecture of the period, but such was not the case. The underlying principle of naturalism was expressed rather in a multitude of new European motifs, which were given precedence over the old traditional patterns. Storm tossed trees, twisted stumps and branches issuing from fenced enclosures or from ponds, rocks and small fragments of earth, castles surrounded by moats, ships, tents and fountains were all drawn with an engaging degree of realism. Animal and bird forms continued to be used, but they became more animated and gradually more familiar in type.

DISTINCT change also occurred in the disposition of the elements of the design over the surface of the fabric. Roundels

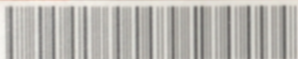


A symmetrical pomegranate pattern of the 15th century. From the Metropolitan Museum.

and other definite shapes enclosing symmetrical motifs were definitely discarded in favor of a freer and more unconventional arrangement, rows of motifs often being shifted about in order to bring variety to the regular repeats.

SIMULTANEOUSLY with the new European textile motifs, there existed, throughout the Gothic period, others which were distinctly Chinese. The so-called pomegranate, most characteristic of all late Gothic textile patterns, was a transformation of the ogival-framed lotus palmette. The oblique, undulating vine pattern, so prevalent in the fifteenth century, was also of Chinese origin. It was at this time, and in textiles of this type that the Italian silk weaving art attained its zenith of perfection.





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